

WILLIAM A. LITTLE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
LABOR ARCHIVES OF WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LIBRARIES SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

TYREE SCOTT
FORMER PRESIDENT, CENTRAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION
FORMER PRESIDENT, UNITED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ASSOCIATION

INTERVIEWEE: TYREE SCOTT

INTERVIEWERS: WILLIAM LITTLE

SUBJECTS: UNITED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ASSOCIATION; CENTRAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION; AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE; HARLEY BIRD; UNEMPLOYMENT; DISCRIMINATION; RACISM; BUILDING TRADES UNIONS; BLACK CONSTRUCTION WORKERS; COURT ORDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE; UNITED STATES V. IRONWORKERS LOCAL 86; DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE; DEMONSTRATIONS; SHUTDOWNS; SEATTLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE; POLICE; ARRESTS; SEATTLE; DENVER; OAKLAND; US SOUTHWEST; ORGANIZING; BLACK COMMUNITY; APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS; BLACK CONSTRUCTION APPRENTICES; EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION; RACIAL DISCRIMINATION LAWSUITS; AMERICAN SOUTH

LOCATION: SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

DATE: DECEMBER 5, 1975

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 01:27:26

FILE NAME: ScottTyree_WLOHP_19751205_Audio_acc2610-003.mp3

The Labor Archives of Washington is committed to preserving the voices and stories of individuals who have contributed to the labor movement's rich history. The LAW presents oral history interviews as part of its contribution to helping curate and create access to a broad and inclusive historical record. These interviews contain the personal recollections and opinions of the individuals involved and, therefore, may contain language, ideas or stereotypes that are offensive or harmful to others.

Individual oral histories cannot serve as the sole source of historical information about an institution or event. These narratives do not represent the views of the Labor Archives of Washington, Libraries Special Collections, or the University of Washington, past or present.

[00:00:00] **TYREE:** It was around I think the middle of March. I left the CCA [Central Contractors Association] and also—well, I didn't do anything, but around the same time I left Scott's Electric, within a couple of weeks of that time. So I was, in essence, unemployed, not doing anything. That period of time, there

was an early spring by a couple of months, and I was contemplating what I was going to do. Harley Bird and I tossed around the idea of starting a construction company, doing contracting work. All the problems that go with that: the need for money, problems with the workers, and all the problems that I had gone through with my father hadn't been resolved, so we just didn't feel like doing that. So we toyed around for a while, and Bird was also unemployed.

So at that time the Quakers [American Friends Service Committee] had been talking to both Bird and I from about December, while he was still with CCA and I was still with my father. We talked with them about what was necessary for workers to organize and what we thought workers should do. They also tried to raise some money. I agreed to help them raise money, but I told them I wouldn't take the job. And Bird also didn't want to take the job, but I did consent to working with them. In the meantime, Bird and I were just doing a little small work my father had that he couldn't do. We wired Jack in the Box, the one up on Broadway and Denny [Way], we wired that Jack in the Box just for income. But I mostly hung around in the park and read. During that two months' time, I might've worked a month out of that time, or three months. Most of that time I sat around, either one or two months, just reading and stuff, wasting time.

Meanwhile, the people in the Service Committee kept talking to me about this deal with organizing workers. I kept going with them trying to raise money and stuff. They kept asking me to take the job, but I told them flatly no, that I didn't want to do that anymore. Quite frankly, I was burned out with my experience of CCA, because at that point we hadn't made no analysis of the what the problem was or where it led to and what we thought would necessarily change it. And it seemed like all the fighting that had gone on in the last few months had been for nothing. We weren't fooling ourselves and saying that things had changed because of it. I mean, certainly our personal situations had changed, but in relation to the industry and Blacks being able to go in hadn't changed at all. At that point, that was all we were looking at, was folks getting into the industry. We weren't looking at the social question that was involved, even though it became clear there were a lot of social questions involved in it at the time, and the way the community responded to stuff that went on the fall before that and the winter.

So the people in the Service Committee were persistent. They kept coming around, and I would go to foundations with them, local foundations and talk to them about the problems and stuff. Finally, in June, I had another job offer lined up, another job lined up with Project Equality. It was a church group that supposedly dealt with the question of discrimination in manufacturers, distributors who sold materials and supplies to the churches. They were supposed to be non-discriminatory in their hiring, so they had this group set up called Project Equality. It was a national organization with offices set up in about fifteen, twenty cities around the country, and there was a couple of staff people and a secretary in each city. What they did was they looked at the hiring policies of those employers who did business with the church. Like for example, Providence Hospital buys paper from Crown Zellerbach. And then you look at Crown Zellerbach, the warehouse's hiring policy or something. But anyway, it wasn't long before I found out that in effect, it didn't do—I mean, I would be like the contact appliance officer. The Church didn't intend to create no problem for those major corporations because, in essence, it was also their source of income, too, in a lot of situations.

But I figured that out in the early part of June and decided I didn't want to take that job. It paid like three thousand dollars per year, more than the other one here, the UCWA thing only paid nine thousand dollars. The problem was that I had three kids, and a baby was due that month. But the the other one paid twelve thousand, but it was just a bullshit job, so I turned it down and decided to go ahead and do the UCWA, I mean, organizing workers.

So the court order went into effect—in the process of all the other stuff, one thing that had happened was they had been sued, the lawsuit that we brought had been combined with the Justice Department. The Central Contractors lawsuit had been combined with the Justice Department lawsuit, and the unions had been found guilty of practices of discrimination under the Title VII decree of the [?long bill thing?]. Having been found guilty, they were ordered to do certain things. They were ordered to take in a certain amount of Black apprentices into each one of the trades annually. That amounted to a little over a hundred, if you counted the operating engineers. If you didn't count them, it amounted to ninety. Actually, it amounted to over a hundred either way, yeah.

So the unions hadn't done anything, this was in June. The order was issued—well, the order didn't go into effect until June 15 or July 15. But the court had found guilty in February and was working on the type of relief necessary to satisfy the problem. One of the things that was significant, the court also ordered the unions to take in out of the Blacks who had previous skills already. There were a lot of guys who got in that category, who already had the skills from working in non-union shops, from working in the South where basically there are no trade unions, from being in the military service or self-employed. Those guys were all named in the court's order as people who had to be let in and given a journeyman certificate and placed in the most preferred category for dispatch.

There was forty-one guys named, and then a lot of other people who were not named. Like, I had the skills, I had worked in the trade from—I'd gone to school in 1960, and I'd worked about five of those years, six of those years directly in the trade, so I knew the work. But that wouldn't have made me get in prior to the lawsuit because of the requirements: high school diploma, one year of algebra, one year of geometry, and those kind of artificial requirements. But I could perform the work, so I was also eligible as one of those people who could go down and get on the most preferred list and have journeyman status, but I wasn't named. So there was a lot of other people who were like me [sneezes] who were not named, who had the skills. Well, the court made a provision for those people, also. That anybody with two years or more of experience can just state that to the union and had be put into that category.

So we had a meeting at my house on about the 25th of June and invited all those tradesmen who had been named as journeymen, who'd been named in the order, plus a lot of other guys who we knew had the skills but who were not named in the order. And about forty of them showed up that night for the meeting. Plus we had a guy from the Justice Department, his name was [?Brad?] who came in—he's dead now—and explained the essence of the court order to people so they wouldn't have to listen to a layman just explain it. So after—well, we said, "Now we've got this order here that's available to us, and people can go to the union hall." A lot of them were working for a non-union contractor, a lot of them were working at Boeing making half—a skill at that time was making seven dollars per hour. They were working at Boeing for 3.50, four dollars an hour, and working at scab shops and stuff like that. So almost all of the guys who came to the meeting went the union hall the next day and signed up on their work list and went to work right away. Some of them worked continuously. And then there were a few of them who didn't have the necessary skills who went back to their jobs at the Boeing Company or whatever. One of the guys—John Thomas? I don't know the name—went to Port of Seattle and has been there ever since then, five years now. There's some more, but I just can't remember their names.

But anyway, there was also the situation with the apprentices. For example, the plumbers were supposed to take in twenty-five Black apprentices into a special program, a shortened program for Blacks only. And then they were supposed to take in seven, or thirty percent of the regular apprenticeship program. And so that made thirty-two people to take in. And that was virtually in every one of the trades. The ironworkers were supposed to take in like twenty-six, the sheet metal was twenty-six, electricians were twenty-five. Well anyway, they

didn't do that, they just made it a point not to even worry with it. So July went by, they didn't take anybody in, and that was when we started up the second series of demonstrations.

Now keep in mind, all of these guys have been coming to meetings. We were meeting on a weekly basis because we also formed an organization. We were meeting at the YMCA on Olive [Street] and 23rd [Avenue] . We started meeting there, and we'd meet there once a week and go over all the situations that had happened to each person and stuff. And we formed the organization and named it UCWA sometime in early July. A month after the order had been in effect, around the 15th of July, nobody had been put to work, except those journeymen who had been named, whereas none of the apprentices had been taken, even though the court had ordered it to be done. So we decided the only way to get it was to raise the issue again in the streets. Very soon afterwards, we stopped a job in the University District, it was a—I can tell you where the building is, it's an old folks home or condominium or something. Now it's five years old, but it's on the corner of 45th [Street] and the freeway [I-] , whatever that is there. Right behind the tavern, there's a big, tall building about fifteen stories. We stopped that job and some other jobs. You know, it's been awhile, I think it was a Safeco building, but we started stopping these jobs.

Anyway, the same day we stopped the first couple or three jobs, the next day, the court had all the parties involved in the lawsuit—and UCWA was not a party to the lawsuit, now. All those parties who were involved in the lawsuit, the court had them in its chambers. This was Judge [William] Lindberg, and he issued a statement to them saying that if those folks were not put to work within ten days, those folks he had ordered to be put in, that he would hold those people responsible in contempt of court. So management decided that they would set up their own little hiring holes inside their offices, which was, in retrospect, we know what they were doing. That was a way to put a clamp on the unions and get some authority over the workforce, rather than the trade unions.

So management started to dispatch out these Black apprentices. They would come to UCWA. About the last weekend of June, the first week of July, we opened up an office on 15th [Avenue] and John [Street] , between John and Thomas [Street] , near GroupHealth. And we were in that office for three years, until they tore the building down, and then we moved over here. But anyway, then people came to the office. They guys would come in, fifteen, twenty guys every day. We'd send them right down to fill out forms wherever they wanted to go, some wanted to go to sheet metal, some wanted to go to the ironworkers, some to plumbers, and so on. Well, we did that. We sent those guys to those different jobs, and I say "we" now because there was people working there. We'd hired a secretary, [Eugena Pope?] was her name. Alice Paine from the Service Committee was also working there. Me and Harley Bird, and Bird was, in essence, a volunteer. He was working, but he wasn't getting paid. We had—I think it raised our total to about nine thousand dollars, but we just decided to spend it until there wasn't any more money.

Anyways, guys would come in and we'd send them to those places. They'd dispatch them out to contractors from the contractor's association's office.

[00:17:14] **WILLIAM:** The AGC [Associated General Contractors] ?

[00:17:18] **TYREE:** Well, AGC was sending out ironworkers, for example. The NECA, N-E-C-A, National Electrical Contractors Association, was sending out electricians. The sheetmetal, mechanical, or plumbing trades, whatever, would send out sheet metal workers. And the Mechanical Contractors Association would send out the plumbers. So the metal trades association would send plumbers, and so on.

So anyway, the result of that was that in about ten days' time, there was about twenty-five electricians who'd gone out, twenty-five or thirty electrician apprentices. The same thing with sheet metal, same thing ironworkers and plumbers. We had about a hundred guys out on these jobs. And Bird, he had a microbus that we got from the Service Committee, and Bird was hauling folks to and from work. Some of the other guys who hadn't gotten jobs, they would get up in the morning and pick up five or six of these guys and haul them out to jobs somewhere, in different places, it was real hectic.

There was varying success. Maybe fifteen of that original hundred guys finished the regular apprentice program and turned out as journeymen. Maybe more than that, maybe twenty, but no more than that. Eighty percent of them dropped out for various reasons. And part of it is that we didn't adequately counsel and didn't know how to counsel, the guys didn't know—operating engineers or sheetmetal workers, they didn't know what was entailed in it half the time. A lot of times they were concerned with which one pays the most. Well, an ironworker pays the most. At the beginning year as an apprentice, they pay eighty percent of journeyman wages, where plumber only starts out at forty percent of journeyman wages. So even though the journeyman wages are much higher for the plumber, guys would go to the ironworkers because it was the most accessible and the highest paid. And you know, that's the most undesirable trade, that's the last one most people want to work in, it's the hardest work, and so on.

But there was incidents where the journeyman would run the apprentices till they—try to make them drop. They changed it often, you know, one journeyman would put the apprentice on rebar and run him, and then the journeyman would switch over with another journeyman on the other end, keep the same apprentice on the other end. That happened to one of the kids at North Seattle Community College, we had to go out and stop the job, the Association members had to go out there and raise hell with them about it.

There was one plumber who finished the program, [Matthew Thornton]. The day he reported to the job at GroupHealth, he reported over there and the union members asked him if he was from the union. He said that he was going to be in the union as soon as someone took him in, but he was there because the court had ordered he be sent there. So the foreman, superintendent, gave him a broom, I mean the plumber foreman, and told him to just clean up. So he got the broom and started cleaning up, and then the laborer superintendent came along and said, "Put the broom down. You're no laborer, this is laborers' jurisdiction." So he couldn't work as a plumber, and he couldn't sweep. We were just in the next block from GroupHealth, the UCWA office. So we were meeting every week there on Wednesday, and this was like a Tuesday afternoon. So Mathew came over there that Tuesday afternoon and told us what had happened on the job, how they wouldn't let him work as a plumber because he didn't come from the union, and one of the plumbers had said, "Screw the judge, why should we let you come on our job?" What they saw, in essence, was non-union people coming on their job. But the problem was, in retrospect, they were not dealing with the union and racism in their union, so we didn't understand that we did what was right.

We went that night to a meeting and about seventy, eighty guys showed up at the meeting. So Matthew got up and told what happened to him, and everybody thought that was absurd. "What the hell, we got a right to work, and they're gonna do this. They wanted us in the union, and they wanted us to work for the union, so we go to court and stuff." So the next day, the place was packed, the office was bulging out. We were just—a hundred muddy boot construction workers showed up and didn't go to work themselves, and all the ones that were trying to get in. So we just filed out of the back door of the office and went over to GroupHealth. On the way over there, some of the guys picked up sticks and pipes and stuff, and we just went through on the first floor, and we made our way around half of the plumbers. And we stopped and asked what their trade was and stuff. "I'm a plumber," "I'm a carpenter." Carpenters can stay, but the plumbers leave the job. And then an hour later, the

owner of the company was ringing a phone to the UCWA, so we told him he could meet with the UCWA members he wanted to that day. He came over there later that day and the group of people that had been chosen to meet with him met with him. They settled the dispute, he agreed to let Matthew work. And Matthew worked on the GroupHealth project for a year and a half before he went to another job.

At that point, the group was very cohesive, and it was new, it was worker-controlled, and the leadership came from the workers. That was the summer of '70. So we spent a great deal that year just replacing guys who's dropped off the program. We also were not represented on the Court Order Advisory Committee, and we didn't know how to set it up to get into the apprenticeship programs and stuff. The guys were not going to school or anything, they were just working. So it took about four or five months to get the classes set up, while they were attending the school at night like the other apprentices and stuff.

One other thing that's important: unions and management both had very superficial kinds of requirements set up for entry into the apprenticeship program. One of them was educational requirements that were ridiculous. The other one was age requirements, equally ridiculous. For plumbers, the cutoff age for plumbers was twenty-one, so if you were twenty-two years old and had not been in the military service, you were too old to apply for the plumber apprenticeship program. In essence, it was a mechanism to keep people out. But all of them were cut off at age twenty-six. But the court moved that up and docked the educational standards to nothing and raised the age limit to age forty-five for all of them. And so that created a situation for a lot of guys to go in, too, because they didn't have to worry about the age question.

Anyway, that whole year, we spent most of the time to replace people, and we were really learning like what the industry was. Even though we had been around, we didn't really understand the intricacies of it. So we, Bird and myself, spent a lot of time learning that year how the industry was run and who in fact ran the industry. While a lot of the guys just got on a job and stayed on it, in the absence of any kind of political education, which we didn't have and most of the members didn't have either, or none of them had, they didn't see any need for them to keep—they came for a period of six, seven months to the meetings, the membership meetings, but those who got on the—I mean, there were two categories of people: those who got on the jobs and didn't really have any problems, and those who had problems.

For those who got on the job and never had any problems, that's about six months, because there's nothing for them to do. And then those who kept having problems, we kept dealing with them. I mean, everything from driving them to work to finding them another job after they lost the one they had. And of course, a lot of the time, the guys' lost jobs had nothing to do with their behavior or the behavior of the white workers, it just had to do with the shortage of work. But that caused attrition problems, the guy ain't got no work. He didn't recognize that by hanging in there, five years later he would get a union card or whatever. So that caused a lot of people to drop out.

The next year was a funny year, it was '71. I say it was funny because of the absurdity of the way that the man uses economics in the absence of the human question all of the time, overriding his racism. An example of that is because he was so busy trying to deal with those few folks who were dropping in and dropping out, coming in and coming out, trying to keep people placed on their own job, and doing the social work kind of work, and we really got into that. June came and went, and that was supposed to be the second group of people going in, the next hundred and whatever amount of people. But sure enough, June came and went. They stopped replacing people who had dropped out. Very early, they were replacing a lot of people who dropped out. I went to Denver a year, sometime early that year, in January, and I was gone off and on almost all of '71, at least up until

September or October of '71. I came back in October, as a matter of fact. But that's not to say I wasn't in touch, we continued to talk about the problem.

There was a lawyer working on it at the time from the Justice Department, by the name of Frank Petramalo, and they were devising all kinds of means to create a climate whereby labor could take in these new people into the trade unions. But the economy was such and resistance was such that they couldn't absorb these new Black workers, so they devised what they called a [?Medium System?] , so that when there was less than five people on the out-of-work list, then they would take in somebody. But this didn't work because there was unemployment amongst the white workers. And as long as there was unemployment among the white workers, the Black workers had to wait to get jobs. Mind you, we were dealing with their racism, and they was using the same shit that the slave owners used, the question of economics. They couldn't afford to pay the slaves, and they couldn't afford to pay these new Black workers. So they didn't take in nobody. So the end of '71, we did all we can to keep the few people we got in, thirty or forty people, trying to maintain those guys in those four trades, when they were supposed to have two hundred twenty or so people in these trades. We were outraged about it, but all we were doing was going through that legal mumbo jumbo. Petramalo would be in court and they would devise this program for bringing people in, and then somebody else would devise something else and do something else, and anyway, it failed.

So in the spring of '72, we decided that—well, the novelty had worn off too. We hadn't been able to raise money for the people who were working at the time. Milton Jefferson was working the staff, Harley was working the staff, I think it was just before Todd [Hawkins] came on. Maybe Todd was here. But anyway, we had a secretary and me. We had gotten to the point where we just said, "To hell with it, we haven't done any good." All this effort counting the CCA, '69, '70, and '71, what we could in fact show for it was thirty-five people in the industry. So we decided to go for broke. But Todd was working, too. So that was when we started [pauses] May 30, the night of May 30. We'd been meeting with a lot of the workers—no, something happened in '71. In '71, we stopped the University project, that was at the beginning of the UCWA stuff. We took over the University Hospital one night at four o'clock in the morning and occupied it all day. But anyway, that led to the same thing.

So in '72, we sat down and we planned it from day one that we were going to either win or we were going to lose, but we were going to take them on one more time in the streets and just show how blatantly they were violating the court's order. Of course, the man is busy meeting with law breakers, but they don't see the white collar criminals as law breakers. They don't see the effects, the violent effects that discrimination has on a community, but they can deal with Black people and the Black Panther Party, and so on. So we took to the streets again, and it started at night, the night of May 31st. We opened the bridge up the morning of June 1st, I guess it was, four o'clock in the morning, the floating bridge. We took out the wiring and stuff so it couldn't close, and then we went over to the other side a couple hours later that morning and started stopping the work on the highway [I-] construction project. Well, the people at the Highway Department knew there was construction down at Garfield [High School] , and they wanted to focus on that as the problem. Well, we knew the highway wasn't a problem, the Highway Department was one of the problems, but we were talking about the industry, again. So they flew Andrews in in a helicopter or something, and when he got there, because he was coming, we got in the cars and left and came back to Seattle. We were not interested in talking with him. So the next day, the folks started getting together again, cause there had been about, oh I guess fifty construction workers who went over there on I-90 and stopped the highway project. We stopped most of it, all the work going from here [Seattle] to Issaquah.

The next day, we went to the University of Washington, and I don't remember what specific projects were there, but we stopped about three, four projects going from the U to the Safeco building. We went to the Safeco building, they were adding an addition on it. And we pulled the plug, and there was a lot of workers on there, and they came off.

The next day, we went to downtown Seattle. They were building the financial center, right across from the Olympic Hotel. We went into there, and I have some pictures of it around here I can find. But anyway, we went there, and they had the cement trucks sitting outside and all that, so we went in, and we found the main fusebox and cut the power. They were having a dedication ceremony, topping it off that day. [laughs] The dignitaries split just as we got there, because they didn't want to get caught, cause they were getting stuck on the top floor, because we had cut the power off of the building. Got the cement trucks and took the keys out and put keys in the back of this cement thing. And we just generally raised havoc that day. We stopped all the work.

Well, the man said that we were a little ridiculous and that we were outrageous, we keep doing stuff, and that they've satisfied us, and we won't settle stuff like it should be settled. Well, people who had any knowledge at all of what was happening, it was clear to them that the man was violating the court's order. So once again, the court made some affirmative steps to try to enforce its order. We ended up camping. The court was moving really slow because it had a big, heavy docket and stuff. Our position was that, well, people want to work and that should be a priority. So we went—the court was going to rule on it a month later or something, and we thought that it was important and that he rule while the atmosphere was still charged. We didn't want to wait until we get a decision that's unfavorable and try to get people back out again. So we went down to the courthouse and camped out on the courtyard. And we stayed there until the judge decided he was going to hold a hearing on this matter in order to do something. They had the audacity to get an injunction against us for demonstrating, they only joined us when they found out they were breaking the law themselves. So we burned the injunction up right in front of everybody.

Anyway, we camped on the court's lawn for about four days, and he finally ruled on it and said, "Do something else." The main rule making them was that UCWA should have the right to dispatch apprentices, because nobody was doing it. They had long since turned it over to the trade unions, the management had, I believe it was the government. So they were still finding ways to keep people off jobs and not send out the people who should go out every year. So the court ordered—but rather than the court ordering them out, to have three hundred people. That's what we should have, we only got like thirty or so. But rather than the court ordering to take in this addition of three hundred people, the court dealt with it in terms the way the whole bourgeoisie deals with stuff. They said, "We can't take any more people, we ain't got that kind of work. So what're we going to do?"

The court, not us, they haven't been able to put pressure on management. They would've been in a position to say, "Okay, you're taking three hundred extra people and putting them to work without laying off white workers." That would cost the man money. What the court decided to do was extend the time period of this order for another five years. And in the process, they started to take in twenty-five this year, the regular hundred this year, rather than taking in all the people they'd missed over the last two years. But he gave us some rights to counsel, and the point of entry into the program was UCWA, so we had some control over that. The control, in essence, meant that we could monitor all our men. They couldn't come up with a bunch of names that we had not seen, nor could they keep counting people who had dropped out, because in order to drop out, they had to come through us to drop them. So we were satisfied with that part of it, but of course, they still had the dispatch, and that was something the court wasn't going to give up. And there was the question between that the unions had been asking, and I said, "Yeah." We were not ever trying to deal with another trade union. We knew no one

to do bargaining for them, we never wanted to do that. What we were trying to do was the racism question in the union.

So from that, some demonstrations kept going on. I mean, they kept going on until they had, in effect, arrested everybody and tied everybody up in court, which was a lesson we didn't ever learn until two years later, the strategy that they use to tie you up in the courtroom rather than deal with what they call a police op. They don't historically throw you in jail. So the project that we finally zeroed in on was the Seattle Community College project.

[00:41:03] **WILLIAM:** What was that, '70 what?

[00:41:04] **TYREE:** '72. And that was when the shit hit the fan. Because the other contractors had given in relatively easily. But this was Cohen, I think it was Cohen, the contractor over here on Jackson [Street], who decided that he wasn't going to close his project down. So we said that we were going to close it down. So we showed up one day. There was about 150 demonstrators, probably about sixty or seventy construction workers on the project. It was in the first phase of it, as it is now, the north end of Seattle Community College. The demonstrators got there, and we were in the court chambers, Harley Bird and myself, and a couple other people, Todd Hawkins and lawyers and stuff were down at the courthouse.

So while the demonstrators were waiting for us to come back, about ten minutes before we got there, one of the white workers, some of the white workers had one of those portable cement mixers up on the top floor, and they decided to pour the water on the demonstrators. So they dumped the water over, and there were a bunch of young people out there who was just crawling for a fight. So the water, when no more hit the ground, people were like up the second floor and just kicked their asses that day. The business agent of the electricians, somebody broke his jaw, also St. Laurent got his nose fractured and his glasses broken on his face. One of the other workers, a white worker, got a concussion. And meanwhile, the cops was over at Bonney Watson [Funeral Home] waiting on orders to move in. So by the time they moved in, the demonstrators just ran out. This all took place in about five minutes time. So at this point I'm going in and telling people to come off the site, people are leaving the site. But when the cops get there, they see me, say, "That's him, arrest him." Well, I ain't did nothing, I'd just got there. And I had the best witness in town, the judge, right? So they arrested me, Michael Ross, Todd, and Sam Martinez and took us to jail, and they released us a couple hours later because they realized they didn't have evidence on us.

So we went back the next day. The next day, they had planned—they had a better strategy. They had planned to deal with us in a more effective way. So the way they set it up, the cops were inside of the construction site, and they had a hundred hard helmeted riot gear cops inside the construction site. Keep in mind, in the mentality of the cops, they thought, "They got away yesterday. And the racism is coming out, some white workers got hurt yesterday, and the Niggers got away. Well, today we're going to have a surprise for them when they come over the fence. We got them."

By the way, McAdoo's got a copy of a tape of this whole meeting that took place before the demonstration, the meeting in the president's office, the president of the college's office. We went in to talk to the acting president at the time, just before a young Black guy from Michigan came. A week before he came or something, there was a white guy acting president. So we went in and told him we wanted the construction site closed, and he said that he didn't have the authority to do that, and we told him to call whoever had the authority. He was hedging. See, he had a surprise for us, the cops inside the site. The site has got an eight-foot plywood fence around it, so you can't see in. It covers the entire construction project. And the white workers, you can see them, of course, up above, on the second, third, and fourth floors. But you couldn't see the cops who were down

below. But they didn't know that we had a police radio, and we was listening to everything they was saying, so we knew they were in there, but they didn't know we knew they were in there. So they were waiting to kick our ass that day inside of there. They was telling everything we were doing, we were listening. One of the guys, [?John Yeats?] , was in the car with the radio. And so we were actually up against the wall. It was a question of going over there and getting bloodied by the cops. It was a war zone. The cops and the white workers were armed to the hilt, and some of the demonstrators was armed, too.

So we talked to him, and we bluffed and said, "We want this project closed, you've got ten minutes in total, or we're gonna close it for you." His thing was, "Go ahead," that's what he was saying, but what he really was saying was—or what he was saying is, "I don't have the authority," and what he really was saying was, "Go ahead and try to close it." So we said, "Well, you've got ten minutes, or we're gonna go in there and close it." So five minutes passed, and we left his office and went outside.

The crowd had gathered behind the bookstore at Seattle Community College—well, it's now a bookstore—and the administration offices and the [Cal Anderson] park back there. The crowd was back there in that park. So we went back, and Micheal Ross started to line people up, he was like one of the marshals, he started lining people up, two abreast, so that we were all the way down to Pike Street, still in the park, but down to Pike Street. Pike or Pine, I think it was Pine? Anyway, that street neighboring Seattle Community College, Pike or Pine. We were all the way to Pine, still in the park, and over here was the old building, called Edison Tech, and there was a new site that was surrounded by the thing. People lined up in single file—

[00:47:46] **WILLIAM:** You just said double file?

[00:47:47] **TYREE:** Yeah, two abreast, so double. Maybe even more, maybe four abreast, because there was like 250 people that day.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

...the intersection, and then turned north again, coming down this way, heading for the site. Well, about along here, after we got across the street, the first group, we started passing along the word back to Michael and the other people who were marshals, that when we get in front of the Edison Building and go inside the building. What we decided to do then was tag this building here. The cops were over here waiting for us to come. So the people in the front back toward the center of the crowd as the crowd moved on. And word was passed on down so that when the middle of the group got here, it was like so. And we just all did like a left front and went into Edison. And of all the 250 people, probably about a hundred went in. But the other 150 or so were standing outside, so as they went in, people started busting up stuff, in the hallways, the lights, everything that was in sight. And we went to the second floor and did the same thing, and to the third floor and did the same thing. Then we went down the fire escape.

Well, two things had happened: Students came out of their classrooms to see what was going on in the hallways and outside, and one was being busted and stuff. And the demonstrators who didn't go into the building initially had one demand, to survey what was going on. And so the students were like demonstrating. At that point, it was like young white radicals, and you couldn't tell them from the white students who were at school. And there were young Black people, and there was also young Black students, so you couldn't tell them apart. So the cops come in and they arrest students and demonstrators. And meanwhile, the people who were actually doing the damage were on the third floor, coming down the fire escape in the back. So we got down there, and there was nobody but us. So we were splitting. Just as we turned the corner to come out near—the building is more like that. We came out about right here, in the back of the building, and as we were making our exit around this

corner, a bunch of cops came around, but there was about a hundred of us and only about ten cops. So Micheal Ross said, "There's only about ten of them," so we turned around and did battle with them and won. We won the battle and then split, we took off running.

I hid in an aquarium, there was a fish aquarium. I had on a shirt that day, too, it was ridiculous. I had on a red, white, and blue shirt with stars on it, a dead give away. So me and a guy named [?Gene Pinchback?] ran into this aquarium, and there were a couple young kids in there, a couple young boys, about ten years old or so, and there was the old man who ran it. And so when we first came in, there was three of us, I don't know the other person, but one was [?Pinchback?]. The guy said, "You look like you're probably going to rob the place." Well, we stood there, and these kids said, "Here come the cops," so we ran around behind the counter of the aquarium and hid down below the counter. So the old man said, "What are you guys doing? What are you hiding from the cops for?" And so I told him we were in the demonstration at the college and some problems had started, and we were hiding. And this old guy apparently had some run-in with the cops and was anti-cop. He was a white dude, he said, "Fuck 'em." So he pulled us into this little back room, and we could see the cops streaming by, chasing the folks who'd gone down the street already. And we hid there.

We called the UCWA office and got a ride. The group reassembled at 23rd [Avenue] and Union [Street]. About 150 of us had reassembled, and we just marched up to Garfield. The cops were regrouping, too. They had gone back—see, what had happened was at the college, they had been waiting for orders. They were standing over here in the construction site waiting for us to come in. We were in the [Edison] building, they never knew that. When they finally did know, the majority of them went around to the front, where what was going on there was nothing but a bunch of students and spectators. So they arrested some of them, beat up a few of them, but the perpetrators were splitting, except for their little scuffle in the back. One person, Michael Woo did get arrested back there, because they caught some guy and were beating him, the cops were, and Woo went back and helped out, and they arrested him. But the rest of us got away.

We were up on 23rd and Union regrouping. The cops were trying to regroup, too. We were more than them, so they couldn't move in on us. So by the time they got together again, we had made it to Garfield. It was during the school year. School was still going on at that point, it was the second week in June. But by the time we got to Garfield, the cops had regrouped, they had got their group back together again. There was about a couple hundred, 150 or so. And so the guys went into Garfield and pulled a bell. So the bell rang, and all the student body came out. And Mr. Bass came out and saw the cops like, "What are they doing? Nobody had given them authority to come on school grounds." The cops weren't itching to deal with all of them folks, because now we got 150 demonstrators and three hundred students from the school. So the cops split, and so we got away on them again, two days in a row.

[00:54:14] **WILLIAM:** Okay, let's go back. The first day, you regroup.

[00:54:19] **TYREE:** The first day?

[00:54:20] **WILLIAM:** Yeah, the first day at the—

[00:54:22] **TYREE:** That was the day they arrested me and Michael Woo.

[00:54:25] **WILLIAM:** Okay, right. And the second day all this stuff occurred. Okay, I got you.

[00:54:30] **TYREE:** So we went back on the third day, and that was the day that people were really armed. It was just really dangerous that day. The cops were waiting. Of course, they had no more options then. But the

crowd was about four hundred people, three hundred people at that point, it was a big crowd, the biggest demonstration we've ever had. Everybody was there: the middle class people, the priests, Catholic priests, all kinds of folks, and women, children, and stuff. So like we had a responsibility at that point not to get people's heads beat. There wasn't no options and stuff, and they weren't gonna let us get away that day. They were ready to shoot on sight. They stopped us at the corner of Pike and Broadway and said that we couldn't come beyond that. So what we decided to do was that some of us would just cross the line and go to jail automatically. This would raise the issue so that there wouldn't be that kinds of shooting and stuff going on. So Sam Martinez, Michael Ross and myself, and somebody else, I know Todd, and I can't remember, there were five of us that went to jail. Then we ended up in the courts.

That was when the judge finally issued the order giving us the stuff that we wanted, on the 22nd of June, '72. And so we started basically doing the same things that we were doing the years before. And by and large in those four trades—well, the result of that is now is about five hundred Blacks working in the—I mean, you can go down there now with your work experience or whatever. And there was about sixty sheet metal workers, sixty plumbers or so, fifty whatever, fifty both of those, fifty or sixty ironworkers, and a hundred or something electricians apprentices. Then there's twenty or thirty journeymen in each one of those crafts. So there's around five hundred people who were working. The only other fight that we've had is this past year with the operating engineers, but we can go into that later on. You should talk really to Michael Woo about that. It started last winter.

[00:57:06] **WILLIAM:** Yeah, I got that already.

[00:57:07] **TYREE:** Oh you got that? Okay. Anyway, that's about what happened through '72.

[00:57:16] **WILLIAM:** Okay, let's go back to the proposal that the UCWA, under the auspices of the American press, proposed to various agencies for funding. Do you have a copy of any of that?

[00:57:34] **TYREE:** You should get it from Alice Paine. She has a copy on file out there, and it's probably around harem but it's probably back in one year's files.

[00:57:47] **WILLIAM:** I might come and go through the file anyway.

[00:57:51] **TYREE:** But basically the proposals have said, in essence, that we combat discrimination in the construction industry, and we dealt with no politics, just the problem that racism exists in the construction trades.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

The stuff we did outside of Seattle, what we had basically done in Denver and the Southwest and some stuff in California, but not nothing to really amount to anything in Oakland. We made some really bad mistakes in both Denver and in California. As a result of it, we got nothing in either one of those places. But two years after we went to Denver and a year after we went to California, we recognized the mistakes that we had made. The mistakes, in essence, were some things that happened in Seattle. But they were not planned things, where people sat down and actually planned out with all the objective conditions. I mean, we didn't say that the mayor is a Democrat and he is a lame duck, and the trade unions support the Democratic candidate who's going to be running, and this mayor don't care, don't want to get in a fight with them, and so on. We never dealt with the

political situation here, we just had the spontaneous kind of acting out that we did. As a result of that, we tried to explore spontaneity, and that don't work.

So we went to Denver, and that was the first thing. Initially, I went, and then later on four other guys from the UCWA went over there. The result of it was that we made all of the classic mistakes that both the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] , and all those movement groups of the '60's made: going into a town, trying to save the people of that town, what the problem is, how it can be dealt with, without weighing the objective conditions that exist in the town. So the first thing we did was organize a demonstration, which came off like clockwork. They were building an extension, an additional concourse and some remodeling in the Denver International Airport, it's in Denver. And it's just adjacent to the Black community, and the workforce is all white.

The reason why we picked Denver was because we thought there was similarities with Seattle. And there was just a tremendous amount of—they were building a lot of stuff from what I'd heard lately, but there was a tremendous amount of construction going on that was federally financed. Everyone I knew had been unusually affected by the businessman in Denver, the whole additional downtown area of the business district in Denver, buildings fifty, sixty stories high in their urban renewal area. So we saw that as like a way to raise the question. And a lot of workers from Seattle had gone over to Denver to work because of the boom in the construction industry over there and the depression in the industry over here. I even met folks who came from Seattle, ironworkers who were over there, Boeing people who were over there selling cars and stuff.

The first thing that we decided to do was to have a demonstration. Well, here all the folks who have a relationship with CCA and UCWA are folks who had a base here in this town, had a background here and were well known. Like, people who didn't know me knew my father, and he had a decent reputation, so folks thought that if he said something it would be alright. This was in the Black community. The same thing with Phil Burton, Lem Howell, all those folks out of the contractors and had been here for twenty-five years, so people could relate with them. And a lot of the workers had grown up here and stuff. But that element completely was non-existent in Denver. We were discounted there.

The result of that, even though we pulled off a demonstration—and I'll talk about that in a minute—people rejected us and said, "Who are those people?" There were some young radicals from Denver involved in it, some young workers from Denver who got involved, and people didn't know them. In the early support of the UCWA thing, they sent their staff out on demonstrations, at some point during the time it was CCA stuff. But they actively opposed what we were doing, and just as so. I mean, just as so in the fact that here are some folks, some unknown people doing this stuff, they didn't know we were people from out of town, but we didn't know who they were or that we had to check with them on their turf, so to say. That may not be right, but we should've understood that. That was a dumb mistake to make. But anyway we made that mistake.

The first thing that we did was in Denver, they had set up one of these Hometown Plans to get Blacks into the construction trades. So we got ahold of the young guy—who was a pretty good guy, who eventually ran for City Council and is now one of two Blacks on the Denver City Council—who was the head of the Denver Plan. So we were able to get a list of the names of all the workers who'd applied for jobs vis-à-vis the Denver Hometown Plan. With that list, we devised a plan whereby we could have a meeting with these guys. So on a Sunday night, I went to Denver and went to a government bureaucrat's office and got one of his secretaries to do some calling and letter writing. So we sent letters out that had been typed in Seattle. The letters were mailed from Seattle, as a matter of fact, but then we called up and followed through Sunday night, Monday night, and Tuesday night, calling these people and asking them to come to a meeting on Wednesday.

So I went to Denver Sunday, and another guy, [?Michael Mac?] , came from Seattle Monday. Then it was really funny, let me tell you, this is the funny part about it. We were standing at a [?pay phone?] in the hotel, right across the street from the capitol. I checked in on a Sunday night, and then on Monday night—we were pretty suspicious looking—Michael checked in the next day, and he got his beard on, blue jeans on, and an army coat on. And another guy, named [?Arty Iver?] , who was a reporter from Seattle, checked in the following day. Meanwhile, those of us who were there were making the phone calls and stuff from this government office, and the bureaucrat didn't know what we were doing. He said we were using his office, because he'd heard about us from some old bureaucrats from Seattle. And we never got in trouble about it because nobody ever knew what happened.

We called these guys up, and we told them about this meeting we were going to have, and that we were going to talk about discrimination in the trades. Denver wasn't as organized in terms of trade unions, but it was discriminatory. There was a lot of non-union work going on, but it was virtually all white, too. So Tuesday Arty came, and Wednesday a guy named Paul King came from Chicago. K-I-N-G. He was just here last week. Paul and I were involved in the National Association of Minority Contractors together, so I had asked him to come. Anyway, we had a meeting that Wednesday night, and about a hundred, 150 guys showed up. So we talked about the strategies and stuff, how to go about it. We were starting to build right then, crushing base with the leadership in the town, we started to build something concrete, even with what we had done in Seattle.

We went the next day to the airport and stopped the production work. We were effective in terms of stopping it for a day. What we did was went on the runway. We went into the airport, and a whole herd of folks went in and then the notices went down—it was before that D.B. Cooper thing. So we just went down one of the concourses and down the steps and out into the parking area and onto the runway. And we stopped it. That was the first time that there had been a demonstration in Denver that people could remember.

And even though Boulder was a very highly charged community just north of Denver, just outside of Denver, the same situation didn't exist in Denver itself, a lot of drugs and stuff, a big drug culture, but not a political community, and a very petty bourgeois Black community. We went out onto the runway and stopped the airplanes and stuff, and we stopped construction, then they arrested us all. We had the momentum but we didn't know what to do with it. We didn't have the support of the middle forces of the Black community in Denver. By and large, it fell apart. I could tell you all the reasons, but that was the main reason. The main reason was Black folks can't change things but they can sure stop stuff, they can veto stuff.

[01:09:04] **WILLIAM:** Yeah, they got veto power.

[01:09:06] **TYREE:** Yeah. So they came down really hard on us. To make a long story short, we couldn't get the cooperation from the bureaucrats there, we didn't have no lawsuit there. We started working with lawyers who were talking about bringing the lawsuits, and we got a lawsuit filed against the plumbers. They mentioned that it was litigated in our favor. But that was a year and a half later, and we had lost all interest in working there at the time, because of all the other problems we ran into. But there is a lawsuit in Denver against the plumbers that was litigated and won. That allowed Blacks to get into the plumbing trades. So if you want to talk about what it was worth, that's what it was worth.

Even though we spent another six months there off and on, talking with construction workers and trying to get them to bring a lawsuit, the problem is if you do that all the time, you invariably end up with the lumpen looking for something to do. I mean, that same thing happened in California.

[01:10:11] **WILLIAM:** The lumpenproletariat?

[01:10:17] **TYREE:** Yeah. You get the cat who is just...

[01:10:19] **WILLIAM:** What the boss called the scum?

[01:10:21] **TYREE:** Yeah. It's three cats who were just hanging out, not really getting involved in anything. You don't know to judge whether he is going to hang in there or not. You don't know their background. There was just so much of that that caused a problem that we ran into, that boxed us in.

[01:10:41] **WILLIAM:** Excuse me, when was this instance, '72 or '71?

[01:10:46] **TYREE:** '71.

[01:10:46] **WILLIAM:** Is '71 when you went to Oakland also?

[01:10:47] **TYREE:** '72.

[01:10:47] **WILLIAM:** '72 in Oakland. And then when you went to Southwest?

[01:10:47] **TYREE:** In '73.

[01:10:47] **WILLIAM:** What was your experience in Southwest?

[01:10:57] **TYREE:** Well, it was [sneezes] completely the opposite of what happened in Denver. We were honest about Denver and didn't as Amílcar Cabral said, "Tell no lies and claim no easy victories." We didn't lie and say that it worked or that it was a victory. We said that we fucked up, quite frankly. So we looked at what had happened. Well, the thing—we knew that it was important that Black workers be organized in some way. That Black worker organizations can in effect lead the Black communities, and with the correct political line, or right political line, can cause much change. We had grown somewhat in ourselves by the time.

So in the Southwest we decided that—well, what happened was we were still trying to raise money to keep UCWA going and all of that. But we found that the EEOC, the leadership of the EEOC—I had met William Brown, who was then chairman of the EEOC, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. We both spoke at Harvard one day to a class, and Bill Gould was at Harvard, Harvard Law School. We both spoke at a class one day, and we got thrown together in a situation waiting on an airplane, so we spent like three, three and a half hours together. What I said in my presentation to the class had made sense. I mean, he understood what the law was and understood how it worked, he was a lawyer and was a real right on cat. Nixon had appointed him. As a matter of fact, that might be a whole long story in itself.

[01:13:05] **WILLIAM:** That's alright, let's stay on topic here.

[01:13:07] **TYREE:** Well, Brown eventually lost his job. His support, ironically, was [John] Ehrlichman and [Bob] Haldeman. So when they got busted, his appointment came up, and he needed to be appointed. John Powell got it, a New York asshole who, in fact, went crazy six months later, and he lost the job. But the chairman of that is like on par with a cabinet post, but it's a commission, like the SEC, Security and Exchange Commission, and so on. But Brown got this presidential appointment. As a matter of fact, maybe LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson] appointed him.

Anyway, he had this appointment from the president and was waiting to see what we could do, how you could help out, in terms of supporting Black workers. So we told him—at the same time, the lawyer who we worked with in Denver had gone to work for the EEOC. The one who brought the lawsuit against the plumbers had gone to work for the EEOC in Denver. He was the deputy director of the Denver Litigation Center. That was the year after the court had amended Title VII and gave the EEOC the power to go to the court only on discrimination cases, just like the Justice Department could do in any kind of case. The problem was EEOC was a paper tiger, it could only hold investigations and make recommendations, but it couldn't actually go to court and try somebody.

I think that what Brown saw in us was the ability to get some good cases developed in the South, or experiment with it anyway. And I think basically he was a decent cat, he was very bourgeois, but he had a point. But basically he was a decent enough person that he was willing to try something, he had enough heart to try. He was the one who brought the AT&T lawsuit, the one with the women against AT&T. It ended up with almost a hundred million dollars in back pay. It was a women's lawsuit, it was probably the biggest one ever litigated in this country. He had filed commission complaints, commission charges against General Motors, the UAW [United Auto Workers], Ford, and U.S. Steel. And it was making a lot of waves, that's why he lost his job. I mean, he lost his support, and he lost his job.

That meeting, by chance, is what actually led to the stuff in the Southwest.

[01:16:04] **WILLIAM:** In what way?

[01:16:07] **TYREE:** We got a chance to spend that time together, those three hours together, just talking about what we were doing, not talking about the EEOC, but just the methods that we used, how we combined the law with community action and brought some changes. But we saw that as an ongoing thing.

Anyway, ironically enough, a year later, Bill Gould had gone to Stanford and had invited Bill Brown to come back and talk to his class. I didn't go talk to the class that time, I went for another reason. Oh, I know what it was, we were trying to organize—by the time, we were doing stuff in Oakland, and I was trying to get Gould working on a case against the Teamsters. But he invited Bill Brown and I to dinner that night. So we went to dinner at Gould's house, and we talked about the idea of working somewhere where we were like educating folks about Title VII and trying to get them to file discrimination complaints in a pattern, so that they could on the major... Like, you might get ten commission complaints in a city from Darigold, for example, but the question of suing Darigold or the Boeing Company, if you were going to weigh the two, you would probably want to sue the Boeing Company. Boeing discrimination might be the same. Darigold might have a policy where Blacks can only do sweeping and cleaning the place up. But the Boeing Company might hire a lot of Blacks, but when the layoffs come, they get laid off first, they might not have shop seniority, and so on. But people don't understand that. They don't file complaints.

So what we were to do was to find enough people in the major industries in the South, or that's what we saw ourselves doing. We didn't get into collusion with Bill Brown by saying, "Go do that." His thing was if you educated enough people, they'll start to do it. I mean like, we put it on paper and would go to churches and community meetings. So much is bullshit. We saw very specific kinds of ways of doing it, going to a particular place at a particular time. Now we are talking industrialists instead of this trade union bullshit, that is, craft union stuff. We talked with specific people who worked there, just doing organizing. That was our position on it, but he was willing to give us the money to do the educational stuff and would not stand in the way of the other stuff, really.

So we looked at where was the best place to do this stuff at in the country, and we picked the Black Belt, cause we were all Black, of course. At that point it was Michael Simmons, a guy from Philly, who was with the Friends [Quakers] who I developed a relationship—or I say “I,” me, Todd, and Harley, and Michael Woo had developed a relationship with him, because he was working for the Friends in employment, which UCWA, of course, is something that came out of the it, we had years ago. And he spent a lot of time out here [Seattle], and we all developed this idea together, at least the four of us.

So I went back and talked with my friends in Denver, the lawyer and stuff who was in the litigation center, and we got a lot of information on cities in the Southwest and the South. We used some criteria, which I have to get for you. We were really scientific about it. We picked areas where there were large Black populations, predominantly Black and white. We didn’t deal with Chicano areas, except for one experiment later on. But we picked cities that were medium in size, that the farthest distance from any of those cities was four hundred miles. And we tried to pick cities where there had not been a lot of “Civil Rights action.” So rather than go to Birmingham and Memphis and Atlanta, we picked Little Rock [Arkansas], Shreveport [Louisiana], Pine Bluff [Arkansas], Tulsa [Oklahoma], Oklahoma City and so on, Waco, Texas. And we decided that we were going to eliminate eight of those—I mean, we’d look at eight cities and eliminate it down to four, and then split it up and work in those four cities.

[01:21:08] **WILLIAM:** What four cities did you end up with?

[01:21:10] **TYREE:** We didn’t. We decided we could do them all, so we took on eight cities. And we threw in Brownsville, Texas, as a kicker just to try to look at the question of Chicanos in the Southwest and see what we could do there. We learned a lot from all of that, but we made mistakes we did make, some things we could have learned there, we shouldn’t have done had we worked anywhere else. We worked in the Southeast now, and we would not do some things we did in the Southwest, however, because of Denver and California, we didn’t make them same mistakes. We went specifically to church meetings, for example, in Pine Bluff. We went to a meeting one night in a church, they was having a community meeting dealing with the problems of sewers in the neighborhood just adjacent to this church. This was a Black neighborhood. We listened to the tempo and the tone of people in the crowd and talked to some of the folks that were there and went to their house and visited with them. And we were armed with the major industries in those towns, we got this information from computers that came out of EEOC: the basic makeup of the workforce, the size of the workforce, the ethnic makeup, the racial makeup, the sex makeup.

So we knew in Pine Bluff that we were looking for people who worked for the St. Louis-Southwestern Railroad, called the Cotton Belt, we were looking for people who worked for Central Moloney Transformers, and we looked for people who worked with... [pauses] There were three major companies in Pine Bluff that we were looking at. In Little Rock we knew that we were looking at Reynolds Aluminium, AFCO Aluminium, and the Coca-Cola bottling company, and the 3M Company, like Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing, and so on. We knew the situation in each of those cities.

But what we did, we got letters when we left here [Seattle] from folks who come from the South, basically a lot of Black preachers who came from the South and had friends in the South. Reverend Leroy Brown, he had friends down there in Shreveport, for example. Judge Charles V. Johnson had a brother in Pine Bluff who was a football coach at Arkansas A&M, and just on and on, a whole host of folks who had friends down there. There were some workers who had friends in Monroe [Louisiana], Willie Wison got family in Monroe, on and on. So we just gathered up all those names and wrote letters, and said when we would be to those towns. In most cases, those folks didn’t help, but we neutralized it. We didn’t go in and they didn’t read about that shit in the papers. And we didn’t do demonstrations anyway, except for a couple towns, and that was done after we had finished

and guys took it upon themselves. The people took it upon themselves, like at United Airlines in Tulsa. The major employer there is American Airlines, they hire like six thousand people or something. It's the largest single employer in Tulsa.

Anyway, the idea there was to organize lawsuits and organize the workers around the lawsuits, so that's what we did. We found a worker, say, from American who might not have been with [?the carrier?] but was somebody we just knew. So we knew somebody in Seattle who knew somebody in Tulsa. That somebody in Tulsa knew somebody who worked for American. That somebody who worked for American knew somebody who was pissed off at American, and that's how we got it going. So as a result of that—we can stop now, we can talk some other time about it—there was a total of thirty lawsuits in seven of those eight cities that we looked at. That's more lawsuits than probably any other workers organization got anywhere in the country. I'm sure of that.

[01:25:40] **WILLIAM:** And that was with the office of the EEOC in 1973?

[01:25:46] **TYREE:** It wasn't, it was independent, it was UCWA.

[01:25:49] **WILLIAM:** But it was contracted?

[01:25:50] **TYREE:** Yeah, they contracted with us. And Brown, after Watergate, when Ehlichman and Haldeman left, Brown left and were victims of the Watergate.

[01:25:59] **WILLIAM:** Your contract was terminated?

[01:26:01] **TYREE:** They took the money out after six months. They piqued what we were doing. But at that point, it was too late.

[01:26:07] **WILLIAM:** So it went into 1974?

[01:26:10] **TYREE:** No, I was just down there two weeks ago.

[01:26:12] **WILLIAM:** I mean in terms of funding?

[01:26:15] **TYREE:** Oh no, the money stopped in January or so. It started in June and it stopped in January.

[01:26:22] **WILLIAM:** Of '73?

[01:26:22] **TYREE:** '74.

[01:26:23] **WILLIAM:** Oh, '74, so it only lasted six months.

[01:26:26] **TYREE:** Yeah, six months. But it's too late now.

[01:26:32] **WILLIAM:** But you've got a viable organization started now that you have an indigenous type of thing. But that was an offshoot that was tied up with this organization at one point in time, and your organization was in charge of it already, weren't you?

[01:26:42] **TYREE:** Yeah, but there ain't no authoritative kind of relationship, it's a mutual kind of relationship.

[01:26:48] **WILLIAM:** Yeah, but it began here, it was an umbrella, a lot of resources came from here and a lot of other things.

[01:26:55] **TYREE:** Yeah, but we're still like—like I still raise money for the group and attend all the board meetings and stuff. Todd and Beverley [Sims] and I went down about six weeks ago. And I went down there two weeks ago. I've been down there in the last two months probably three times, and I'm going to be back down there in January.

[01:27:21] **WILLIAM:** Okay, I think we got most of that.